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PROF. ADOLF HARNACK ON THE RELIGION OF SCIENCE.

THE *Outlook* of April 28, 1894, contains an article by Prof. Adolf Harnack, entitled "Pro Domo," in which he replies to a review of his "Outlines of the History of Dogma," which appeared under the signature of Merwin-Marie Snell in *The Monist* for January, 1894. The Professor states that "the criticism in *The Monist* gives a fairly detailed account of the contents of the book," but he resents bitterly a few comments which he understands to involve a charge of duplicity. The reviewer remarks that Professor Harnack reverses the pretensions and merits of most other books on religious history. They profess to be impartial, though they are really *ex parte*, while Professor Harnack's work is characterised by an obtrusive affectation of partisanship though in reality it is perfectly fair and judicial. This, in Professor Harnack's interpretation, means "the book is honest, the author is dishonest." Lest any injustice be done to Professor Harnack in the columns of *The Monist*, I have taken the pains to investigate the case. As it is natural that a fearless investigator of ecclesiastical history who professes to be a Christian, will always by his orthodox brethren be accused of equivocation because a faithful believer must, in their opinion, bring into captivity every thought, I can understand the sensitiveness of the Professor on this delicate point, the more so as we learn from an editorial note of the same number of the *Outlook* (pp. 737-738) that he is of a "nervous temperament," but I can assure him that the reviewer, whom I have personally questioned on the subject, had not the slightest intention of throwing the least shadow of doubt upon his honesty.

Professor Harnack, however, does not merely speak *pro domo*, but also makes an assault on the position of *The Monist*: he not only repudiates the supposed charge of hypocrisy but retorts at the same time with an unwarranted attack upon the Religion of Science. I shall discuss his reply not for the purpose of offsetting his *pro domo* by a *pro domo* of mine, but in order to elucidate the problem which is the common object of our investigations. I should be glad to drop all personal matters and confine myself to a brief exposition of Professor Harnack's theology in the light of the Religion of Science, but I trust that a few words of explanation will convince Professor Harnack that the arguments which he supposes to have determined the judgment of his reviewer are inapplicable. Professor Harnack solves the problem which presents itself to his mind, "How did the critic reach the slanderous accusation?" in the following way. He says:

"Simply because he is unable to imagine that a man who candidly examines history can believe in the living God, and find and recognise him in Jesus Christ. To him such faith is absurd, and, hence, it appears inconsistent with sound learning. If, now, he finds in a book sound learning and this faith, he is obliged to conclude that the author, either in the one respect or the other, is a hypocrite. But since one cannot feign sound learning, it must be that the faith is feigned. *Tertium non datur.*"

Before I enter into a discussion of the main subject, which is a comparison of Professor Harnack's theology and the Religion of Science, I wish to make a few personal remarks. The reviewer, Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, must not be identified with the editorial management of *The Monist*. Our contributors and reviewers are by no means (as Professor Harnack apparently assumes) expected to represent the standpoint of the magazine; they are free men and express their private opinions under their own signature, making the editor, however, in so far co-responsible for what they say, as he accepts their articles for publication. Whether or not Mr. Snell professes the Religion of Science is not for me to say, but judging from a late article of his in the *Non-Sectarian*, I am inclined to think that however much he may be in sympathy with it, he does not make it his own faith. Mr. Snell's position is quite peculiar. Son of a Protestant clergyman, he became a convert to Catholicism and was

for several years secretary to Bishop Keane of Washington. He left the church about two years ago and has of late allied himself with the Unitarians ; but while, in agreement with the Religion of Science, he adopts the principle of free investigation, he still cherishes in his heart a peculiar love of Romanism on account of its rites and institutions. Professor Harnack will understand the review better if he considers the character of his reviewer. The very passages of which Professor Harnack complains show traces of Mr. Snell's Catholicism—not of rationalism.

Mr. Snell, like many Catholics, has a grudge against St. Augustine whose theology he regards as a retrogression and as the basis of obscurantism. He believes that the Roman Church allows more freedom than the Lutheran Church and attributes the narrowness of the latter to the influence of St. Augustine. Thus the more he admires the progressive spirit of Professor Harnack, the more is he pained to find Professor Harnack constantly singing the praises of the Latin father. In this sense Mr. Snell says :

"Most thinking men will not partake of the Augustinian and Evangelical sympathies strongly and openly expressed by Dr. Harnack in many places throughout his book ; and it is more than questionable whether the Harnack of the closet is in accord with the Harnack of the rostrum."

Mr. Snell means that Professor Harnack's modes of thought are anti-Augustinian while his utterances exhibit an undue overestimation of Augustine. We do not care to decide between Mr. Snell's "Catholic" underestimation of St. Augustine and Professor Harnack's "Evangelical" overestimation ; we simply state that (as the context shows in which this paragraph appears) Professor Harnack has misinterpreted the passage.

There is another misunderstanding which rises from the same source. Professor Harnack says :

"Luther did away with the old dogmatic Christianity and put a new evangelical conception in its place. The Reformation is in reality an exit of the history of dogma." (P. 556, Engl. tr.)

There are few Lutherans even now who would assent to Professor Harnack's conception of Lutheranism, and I myself can only agree with Professor Harnack, if he modifies this statement so as

to say that the Reformation introduced into the history of the Church an element which in its further evolution could not but bring about an abolition of dogma. But he must not be blind to the fact that there is plenty of dogmatism in all the Lutheran churches. That Mr. Snell resents Professor Harnack's proposition to lay all the evils of dogmatism at the door of the Roman Church and claim an indemnity for the Lutheran Church, is but natural, although he had better suppressed the remark as to his "suspicion that the history of dogma in the churches of the Reformation is excluded because it is too delicate a subject to be handled with safety under the auspices of the State Church of Germany."* The administration of the State Church of Prussia exercises upon the theological faculties an indirect but strong influence which by no means favors the spirit of free inquiry. That under such conditions German professors are careful in their expressions to avoid all unnecessary offence is but a matter of course. Professor Harnack urges that he personally is untrammelled, "for," says he, "no promise [to defend and teach the Lutheran religion] was exacted from me when I entered the faculty;"† and he adds, that the provision of the Prussian State law is "Science and instruction in science shall be unfettered." As to the latter we know the law and also its execution. It is true that the life, living, and personal liberty of a professor are not endangered, but his activity can be rendered ineffective, he can be spiritually killed, he can even be urged to quit the theological faculty. I need not mention instances for Professor Harnack will know them better than I do; but I know whereof I speak. There is no use in denying the annoyances to which Bible criticism is exposed in Germany. Professor Harnack himself had his full share of them. Nor is there any reason for German theologians to resent a public mention of this

* Mr. Snell should have said either the several "State Churches of Germany," or "the State Church of Prussia." There is no "State Church of Germany."

† (1) I understand this sentence to mean that "no vow was ever exacted from Professor Harnack." (2) We omit to mention Professor Harnack's remark—that "the faculty is not Lutheran, but a Union of Lutheran and Reformed,"—firstly because we are at present not concerned with the difference between Lutherans and Reformed, and secondly because the Union was made under the explicit stipulation that the confessions of both denominations should remain unaffected.

calamity, for they cannot be blamed for the misapplied paternalism of the ecclesiastical authorities of their country. On the contrary, they must the more be honored. Any one familiar with the situation will join me in expressing my unreserved admiration for the manhood of German theologians who, as a fact, are unrivalled in the wide world for their thoroughness and fearlessness. The flourishing condition of German criticism under externally most unfavorable conditions reminds one of the palm-tree which, when under the pressure of a heavy burden, only grows the statelier and nobler. There is plenty of piety in England and America, but where more than in Germany is piety closely allied with that love of truth which shows itself in an undaunted criticism even of the venerable and dearly beloved sacred writings?

In giving these explanations, I do not mean to say that I should have used Mr. Snell's expressions or that I make them my own; I only elucidate their meaning and the sense in which I want them to be understood. In glancing over his remarks I find several things to which I would take exception.

But now I have to turn the tables and ask Professor Harnack on what ground he imputes to a man whose faith is the Religion of Science the narrowness of regarding all thinkers of a different stamp as "fools or hypocrites"? Professor Harnack demands of a critic "to make an attempt to understand the author's meaning before he tears him in twain." This is good ethics, but does he practise what he preaches? Confusing the reviewer of his book with the editor of *The Monist*, Professor Harnack makes a sally at the Religion of Science. He says:

"I will help my critic a little. According to his idea—and, alas! he is supported in this by some Christians, as we shall see in our second section—the Christian faith appeals to a collection of ancient writings, which are held as sacred and inerrant, to a mass of miracle-narrations, and to a childish conception of the universe and of man. If, now, it is proved that these writings contain errors, that the miracle-narrations are not wholly credible, and that the universe is not such as it was at one time regarded, then faith falls to the ground. Further, the critic is of the opinion that there is a 'Religion of Science,' which can be deduced from an observation of the system of the universe and of the laws of motion; and that this is the only religion. Finally—and this is his chief thought—he believes that all the

phenomena of nature and of history are to be explained through the 'Evolution des Einen' (Evolution of the Monad). I should rejoice if I were mistaken, but I presume that I am not.

"Now, as regards all these doctrines, I hold other views. I believe that the Christian religion still shines just as brightly as formerly, although its books no longer appear inerrant, its miracle-narrations fall, and its old cosmology is destroyed. For the Gospel—that is, the Christian religion—has only *one* aim: that the soul may find its God, and cleave to him in humility and love; and it promises to those who love Jesus Christ, and follow him, that they *shall find God*. Further, a "Religion of Science" is to me a wholly indistinct conception, with which I do not know what to do. I know only of a religion which gives a peace higher than all reason, therefore also higher than all science; and I know only of a religion which is mystically experienced by us, and which receives its confirmation, not from the course of nature, but from conscience and history. Finally, of an 'evolution' I also can speak; but I do not pretend to have found the unity of nature and of spirit, of the realm of gravitation and the realm of moral worth. I believe that they also have their unity; not, however, in an Unknown, but in the living God. However, I can make little use of this faith in the scientific investigation of nature and history. Each of these realms has its peculiar laws. They are deeply involved each in the others; but of what assistance can the science of nature be to me, if I wish to find out to what *persons* our present humanity is most indebted for those powers of faith and conscientiousness, of love and sacrifice, of courage and industry, and when I reflect upon the question as to how these powers are constantly sustained for us? The principle of evolution I also seek to apply wherever its application seems to me possible; but I am not able to include personality and ethics therein, and I am sure that the mysterious Being who rules heaven and earth reveals himself to us in *humanity*. Here he has not left himself without a witness; and from this starting-point I also seek to understand Jesus Christ—the Son of God among the children of God. By my critic this is regarded as an exploded theory of the world. I believe, however, that it more nearly corresponds to the facts which we see about us than does his. In any case, his theory imposes a heavy penalty upon him—he is obliged to regard all who believe in the living God, and find him in history, as either fools or hypocrites. I am in a more favorable position; I hold my opponent to be neither a fool nor a hypocrite, but a misguided man."

Professor Harnack has been bitterly accused in German theological magazines on account of his opinion on the Apostolicum. He was denied the right of calling himself a Christian,* so that I

* It is usually held that a clergyman whose world-conception has broadened under the influence of science must leave the church. We contend that it is his duty to stay. The question is ventilated in an editorial of *The Monist* (Vol. II. No.

wished at the time I could jump to his assistance ; and now I find him, in whom I had hoped to find an ally, in full armor against me.

We, the editors of *The Monist*, are in a similar predicament to Professor Harnack. The believer in the letter on the one side decries us as atheistic, while the iconoclast on the other side calls us time-servers, because we continue to use the words God and religion, although in a purified sense and with a deeper meaning.

I am at a loss to account for the sources of Professor Harnack's information concerning the Religion of Science. Mr. Snell's review contains no trace of it. He mentions the Religion of Science once in connexion with the Alexandrian school, but in an indifferent manner. Professor Harnack apparently opens a broadside fire upon the idea of a Religion of Science in general. But why and for what purpose? He fights in the dark. Where can he find in any one of our publications such views on Christianity as he here imputes to the Religion of Science? Let him quote the passage in which the Christian faith has been said to appeal to a childish conception of the universe and of man. The readers of *The Monist* will know how wide of the mark Professor Harnack's comments are ; I do not think it necessary to refute them.* Be it sufficient here to say that Religion of Science is not the name of a sect ; it does not denote a visible but the invisible church. It characterises a certain religious attitude which may be found among men of various denominations. "Religion of Science" means Religion of Truth, Truth being ascertainable according to the methods of scientific inquiry. Truth being a much misapplied term, the word "science" has been chosen to point out without equivocation the path that leads to truth.

The foundation of the Religion of Science is the principle that it is a sacred duty to investigate the truth with the best means at our disposal, and when it is ascertained, to regulate our conduct

2, pp. 278-285) entitled "The Clergy's Duty of Allegiance to Dogma and the Struggle Between World-Conceptions."

*The words "Evolution of the Monad" are apparently inserted by the translator and must not be charged to Professor Harnack's account. I do not know where he has found the expression "Evolution des Einen," of which he says "and this is his chief thought"; nor do I know what is objectionable in the phrase. All depends upon the meaning of the word "*des, Einen.*"

accordingly. Truth is briefly a concise and exhaustive description of fact ; a scientific description of facts is what is commonly called "natural law," and natural laws formulate the permanent in the transient, the everlasting in the change, the abiding in that which passes away. An investigation into the nature of natural laws shows that they must be all consistent with one another. There is but one truth, and all various truths are but so many aspects of that one truth. It has been claimed that religious truth can stand in contradiction to scientific truth, and that religious truth is superrational. He who *ex principio* uses a contradiction as the cornerstone of his world conception, builds upon sand. People who cannot gain clearness of understanding naturally resort to such ideas, but they ought to be conscious of the fact that it means a bankruptcy of both their religion and their philosophy. There is no duality in truth. All truth is sacred, all truth is divine, all truth is a religious revelation. Or, in other words, science *is* revelation.

We do not deny that the sacred canon of Christianity is a revelation ; we only deny that it is the *only* revelation or the *standard* by which all other revelations must be measured. We reverse the old order of argument ; we do not say "Love thine enemy" is a binding injunction because we read it in the Gospel, but we say the spirit of the Gospel is divine because and to the extent that it contains moral truths which are based upon a broad sympathy and a profound comprehension. We must learn to trust in truth, and we must have faith in truth, for faith in truth is the only true religion in the world. If God is not in truth, we had better let God go. If truth does not teach morality, then there is no morality. If truth is unreal, then the world ought not to exist and life would not be worth living.

What shall we say of an inquirer into truth who declares :

"I can make little use of this faith in the scientific investigation of nature and history."

I am grieved to say that the sentence comes from the pen of Professor Harnack. Professor Harnack, a leader among the most competent, who has so vigorously and boldly applied "his faith in the scientific investigation of history," comes and says he can make little use of it. I fear to repeat Mr. Snell's words, that it is "more

than questionable whether the Harnack of the closet is in accord with the Harnack of the rostrum," lest Professor Harnack might again misunderstand the meaning of the words. But it seems to me clear that Professor Harnack in his study follows the injunctions of the Religion of Science, but when he appears before the public he denounces it as useless.

This is no charge of hypocrisy, but of inconsistency, and I am open to conviction. Truly Professor Harnack's "sound learning is not feigned," but it is, by some inadvertence, just a little twisted. Professor Harnack is not clear concerning the philosophical basis of his religious conceptions; therefore, "the idea of a Religion of Science is to him a wholly indistinct conception." He lives up to the ethics of a religion of science in the sanctum of his study, where he moves within the boundary lines of his specialty, but as soon as he enters the sanctissimum of his heart his faith in truth fails him, and he surrenders every attempt to throw the light of science into the wondrous depths of the human soul. He says: "I know only of a religion which is mystically experienced by us." If Professor Harnack would but be consistent, he would apply right here the principle of investigation, and all the clouds of his mysticism would disappear.

It is the office of science, i. e., of clearly presented truth, to dispel mysticism; but understand me rightly: In saying this, I do not advocate the eradication of mysticism, or mean to denounce it as obscurantism. Mysticism is a very important element in the structure of the human soul; and it is the path to truth upon which religion travels—indeed, it is, so far as I can see, the only path upon which the religious evolution of mankind can take place. When comparing science with religion, we are, in consideration of the conservative attitude of our theologians, inclined to say that science is in advance of religion. This is true in many respects, but not concerning the main issues of religion. In the recognition of moral truths, religion has anticipated the results of scientific inquiry. The great religious teachers of mankind have, with a prophetic insight into the nature of things, so to say, by a religious instinct, proclaimed truths which the sages of their times were unable to resolve

or account for. Science must catch up with religion and must learn to decipher the grand utterances of Jesus of Nazareth, and to do this is the sole object of all theological scholarship and of the philosophy of religion. Many are diffident and say it cannot be done, but we say it must be done ; man's rational nature impels him to do it ; and it is his highest duty to understand the nature of his religious ideals.

The great facts of history are repeated in our daily experience. Who of us has not, long before his intelligence developed into full maturity, on various occasions dimly felt the correct solution of moral problems? As there is a life-preserving instinct in the world of lower animals, so there is a soul-quickenning moral instinct in man which is mystically experienced. Professor Harnack seems to believe that our mystical experiences cannot or should not be subjected to scientific analysis. If this is his position, we differ from him ; if not, how can he arraign the Religion of Science as profitless?

Professor Harnack may regard the Religion of Science as rationalism; and in a certain sense it is rationalism, but in another sense it is not. It all depends whether we mean by rationalism simply a free exercise of man's reason, or that historical movement which attempted in a most prosy way to rationalise the religious traditions of Christianity. On the one hand, we do not say that man can be saved by reason and by reason alone, for man must work out his salvation with diligence ; he must be active and energetic, and in order to continue in his work he must have the enthusiasm of faith and a holy zeal for the cause of truth. Reason is only one side of man's being, and we are not blind to the existence and importance of other sides. But on the other hand we say, Give unto reason what is reason's ; hand over to rational inquiry the whole field of your experiences, external as well as internal, and investigate the bottom facts from which develop such religious ideas as God, soul, and immortality. There is truth in all of them, and you will find that a real, thorough comprehension of your religious notions will always tend to deepen them, and will show truth in a higher significance and a nobler sublimity. For truth is greater than all mythologies.

Professor Harnack has not as yet found the unity of nature and spirit, but he believes in it; he trusts to find it "not in the Unknown, but in the living God." Very good! search for unity and you will find it—not in the Unknown,* but in the knowable realities of life. The first condition, however, of finding a unity of nature and spirit is to drop the antithesis between both, for spirit is natural; spirit is a part of nature as much as a man's thoughts are part of the man. Nature is the whole, and spirit is the crown of nature; it is nature's divinity, without which the whole creation would be a meaningless jungle.

It is not my intention to criticise Professor Harnack's confession of faith, which he calls "a living faith in the living God" (see, for instance, p. 546). But I cannot help criticising the form in which he states it. A God who is not a living God is no God, and a faith that is not a living faith, that is to say, an actual power in man's soul, is no faith. What is the use of heaping up words, which in their unnecessary iteration make the impression of contentious protestation? Professor Harnack contrasts the living God with "the philosophical or mystical abstraction" (p. 546), and calls the former "the revealed, the assured, the gracious God, apprehensible to every Christian."

Had Professor Harnack borne in mind the nature of knowledge and the methods of representing realities in thought, he would not have ventured upon these amplifications. What is his idea of man's soul but an abstract, while the object which the word soul represents is a living reality? All our notions are abstracts and the idea of God is as much an abstract as the terms matter and energy. Death will lose most of its horrors in the mind of a thinking man, especially if he is an experienced physician; is for that reason a more scientific conception of death less real than the fright of a panic-stricken crowd? The physicist's definition of force is not of a paler cast of thought than that of the farmer, and the philosopher's idea

* Professor Harnack probably regards *The Monist* as an agnostic publication. He is mistaken. Professor Harnack is probably more agnostic than *The Monist*, for his "living God," who is not the Unknown, is later on called "the mysterious Being,"

of God does not grow lifeless in the degree that it becomes more exact. Professor Harnack's expressions would pass unchallenged in a prayer-meeting but are out of place in a scientific elucidation where they are not only liable to be misunderstood as orthodox asseverations, but are also actually erroneous, bringing about an antagonism between religious sentiment and the philosophical comprehension of religious ideas which does not exist. That God, who in order to be and remain alive, must not become philosophical, is doomed before the tribunal of scientific critique.

The science of nature, as a whole, and also the various branches of science, especially psychology and ethics, are of greater importance to theology than Professor Harnack is aware of. He says :

"Of what assistance can the science of nature be to me, if I wish to find out to what *persons* our present humanity is most indebted for those powers of faith and conscientiousness of love and sacrifice, of courage and industry."

He lays great stress upon the fact that the Gospel *is* Jesus Christ—a person. He says in his "History of Dogma" (Engl. tr. p. 10):

"It can be shown, that everything that is 'lofty and spiritual' in the Psalms and Prophets, and everything that had been gained through the development of Grecian ethics, is reaffirmed in the plain and simple Gospel; but it obtained its power there, because it became life and deed in a *Person*, whose greatness consists also in this, that he did not remould his earthly environment, nor encounter any subsequent rebuff,—in other words, that he did not become entangled in his times."

Setting aside the question as to the nature of Christ's greatness, we wish to say that any one who lays so much stress upon the incarnation of the Gospel in a person should first of all concentrate all his attention upon finding out what is the nature of personality. Much has been done of late in this line. I only remind the reader in this connexion of Prof. Th. Ribot's excellent memoirs on psychological problems. As soon as we understand the nature of a personality we shall overcome the mysticism that is still attached to the theological conceptions of the soul and the soul's immortality. We shall also learn to understand why God cannot be personal but must be superpersonal. Professor Harnack is at liberty to denounce the idea of a superpersonal God as atheism. We shall patiently bear the opprobrium, in the hope that he will himself by and by come

to the conclusion that the attribute of personality can only belittle God and that the belief in a personal God is after all only a higher type of paganism.

Having, in his way, characterised the Religion of Science, Professor Harnack says, "I should rejoice if I were mistaken." Very well then, there is cause enough to rejoice; and let me add, that I have always regarded Professor Harnack as one of the chief pioneers of the Religion of Science. I am sorry to see that he has not as yet freed himself from the bondage of mysticism; but since in his work he adopts the ethics of the Religion of Science, we must feel confident that his path will lead him at last into the full light of the new dispensation which is the fulfilment of all the old prophecies, the only orthodox and the only catholic religion.

EDITOR.